WORKS LIST

   Humbrol enamel on board
   43 × 53cm
   James Keith Brown and Eric Dietenbach, New York

2. Undergrowth, 2008
   Humbrol enamel on board
   91 × 121cm
   Private Collection

3. The Back That Used to be The Front, 2008
   Humbrol enamel on board
   92 × 121cm
   Private Collection, Devon

   Humbrol enamel on board
   92 × 121cm
   Shane Akeroyd Collection, London

5. Scenes from The Passion: The Library and the Back of the Triple Triangle Club, 2000
   Humbrol enamel on board
   75.5 × 100.5cm
   Wilkinson Vintners Collection, London

6. No Returns, 2009
   Humbrol enamel on board
   147.5 × 198cm
   Private Collection, Devon

7. Scenes from The Passion: Summer Holiday, The top of Frisby Road, 2000
   Humbrol enamel on board
   77 × 101cm
   Nancy Delman Portnoy

8. The End of Time, 2008–9
   Humbrol enamel on board
   147.5 × 198cm
   Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London

   Humbrol enamel on board
   77 × 101cm
   Sarah & Louis Elson

10. Dead End (Thursday), 2008
    Humbrol enamel on board
    77 × 101cm
    Mr and Mrs Stephen Fordham

11. Scenes from The Passion: The First Path, 2000
    Humbrol enamel on board,
    75.5 × 100.5cm
    Private Collection

12. The Time Machine, 2010
    Humbrol enamel on board
    56 × 74.5cm
    Mr and Mrs R. Burston

13. The Assumption, 2010
    Humbrol enamel on board
    56 × 74.5cm
    Private Collection

    Humbrol enamel on board
    91 × 121cm
    Private Collection, London

15. Scenes from The Passion: The Cup Shop, 1999–2000
    Humbrol enamel on board, 43 × 53cm
    Tamar Arnon & El Zagury

    Humbrol enamel on board
    43 × 53cm
    Carolyn Alexander, New York

    Humbrol enamel on board
    43 × 53cm
    Judith and Richard Greer

    Humbrol enamel on board
    43 × 53cm
    Peter St John and Siw Thomas
George Shaw paints the landscape of his teenage years, selecting scenes of the everyday from within a half-mile radius of his childhood home on the Tile Hill estate in the West Midlands. Typical of postwar British social housing, Tile Hill could belong to any city or have originated at any time between the early 1950s and the late 1970s. The estate was created with the ingredients to provide a balanced working and social life: a school, a library, a social club, five pubs, a recreation ground and woodlands that surround and weave in between the regimented rows of houses. These seemingly arbitrary details of suburban infrastructure make up the cast of a series of paintings ongoing since the mid-1990s.

It was the experience of returning to Tile Hill after moving away, studying and a lengthy break from art, that spurred Shaw to use the estate as a source. Despite the nostalgic, autobiographical beginnings of the paintings, Shaw’s work delves far deeper. Without figure or detail to bind them to time or space, the paintings present something universally familiar: a kind of record of Englishness and youth that could come from any moment over the last thirty or forty years. At first take, the works seduce as another’s fragmented memoirs: the artist’s house, his local pub, the enclaves of model-making. Yet resolution is never found in them. The palette is typically the wrong one, belonging to neither night nor day, so that the paintings exist within a permanent state of in-betweenness. Collectively, the effect dislocates their reading and function away from the personal, evoking a dream-like atmosphere which chimes with the psychological response Shaw felt when returning to this place of memory. The palette is typically the wrong one, belonging to neither night nor day, so that the paintings exist within a permanent state of in-betweeness. Collectively, the effect dislocates their reading and function away from the personal, evoking a dream-like atmosphere which chimes with the psychological response Shaw felt when returning to this place of memory.

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A. The City of Tomorrow, 2011
Spray paint

B. Stuck, 2008
Gouache on paper

C. The fascination of islands I, 2009
Cardboard, plaster resin, spray paint, gold leaf, gouache, plywood and emulsion

D. The fascination of islands IV, 2011
Cardboard, plaster resin, spray paint, gold leaf, gouache, plywood and emulsion

E. The fascination of islands II, 2011
Cardboard, plaster resin, spray paint, gold leaf, gouache, plywood and emulsion

F. The fascination of islands V, 2011
Cardboard, plaster resin, spray paint, gold leaf, gouache, plywood and emulsion

G. No Swings, 2011
Gouache

H. Sculpture for the Colonel’s Estate, 2008
Ink on Day-Glo paper

I. An inner city afternoon, 2009
Ink on Day-Glo paper

J. Subway relief, 2009
Ink on Day-Glo paper

K. What a wonderful world tomorrow will be...
2008
Cardboard, Jesmonite, spray paint, hardwood dowel, plant

SOUTH LONDON GALLERY
EXHIBITION GUIDE
7 MAY - 19 JUNE 2011
Brothers Simon & Tom Bloor have been working collaboratively since 2003, exploring moments of flawed idealism through sculpture, drawing and installations. For their SLG exhibition they present a group of new and recent works to establish a commentary on ideas of urban play as a utopian pursuit.

Introducing the exhibition in the first gallery space is a large wall text, its scale at odds with the relatively small space in which it is shown, making it difficult to read and even disconcerting. This sense of wrong-footedness continues with the text itself as it vies with its garish spray-painted background to proclaim that

“It is in the city of tomorrow that we will work out our destiny.”

A misquoting from Planning for Play by Lady Allen of Hurtwood, an influential advocate of child welfare and play, the text is rendered in a font specially designed by the Bloors, the width and straight edges of which mean it can easily be applied using masking tape. That the end result is reminiscent of the work of conceptual artist Ed Ruscha is a twist which the Bloors enjoy, referring to it as “accidental appropriation”, tying in, as it does, with their wider interest in disrupting the assumed hierarchy between various materials, media and art forms. Their use of spray paint in this piece, for example, is not intended to glorify tagging or graffiti, but rather to demonstrate its potential to be brought into a ‘fine art’ context, simultaneously allowing them to experiment with an act of ‘bruising’ the architecture.

In the next room the most precious of materials, gold leaf, adorns a series of cardboard sculptures as maquettes for monuments to urban play. On closer inspection, however, their plausibility as maquettes collapses, the painted ply plinths being as much an integral part of these sculptures as the modular designs they support. Questioning the relative value or otherwise of different materials, as well as that of established boundaries between fields of practice, for example design, fine art, graffiti, the gold leaf is tainted with small gouache marks as if to translate the inevitable degradation of urban furniture into an integral part of the design. This, combined with the absurdity of a monument to play which can’t be played on, points to the failed idealism which is differently portrayed in the Bloors’ gouache drawing of a cartoon appropriated from The New Yorker magazine depicting a child with its head stuck in a sculpture.

In the next gallery the play sculptures of the artists’ childhood feature once again in what at first appear to be old-fashioned photocopies on fluorescent paper, but which are in fact meticulously hand drawn copies of photographs. Alongside another outsized rendition in gouache of a New Yorker cartoon, a cheese plant is one of several materials in a comical but complex sculpture. Just as the ply plinths and gold sculptures were given equal material value in the monuments to play, here the plant, cardboard and fibreglass planter and brightly coloured sticks are united in a sculpture which poses more questions than it offers answers. A hybridisation of the urban and domestic, this single work meshes the languages of sculpture, household decoration and municipal design, while confounding our expectations of familiar materials.

Making direct reference to 1960s concrete planters which doubled up as bollards, the missing triangle in this version and the colourful stains revealed beneath might be understood as a visual comment on the inevitability of decay, and a critique of art’s continued nostalgia for our recent past.

Also showing in the Main Gallery

George Shaw: The Sly and Unseen Day
25 May – 3 July

The Sunday Spot
Every Sun, 2–4pm, Free
Explore the misuse and appropriation of objects inspired by the current exhibitions at these playful workshops for families.

Family Day
Tue 31 May, 2–4pm, Free
Join us for hands-on workshops for families led by artists Lauren Willis and Heather Jones and inspired by the current exhibitions. All welcome, ideal for children aged 3–12 years.